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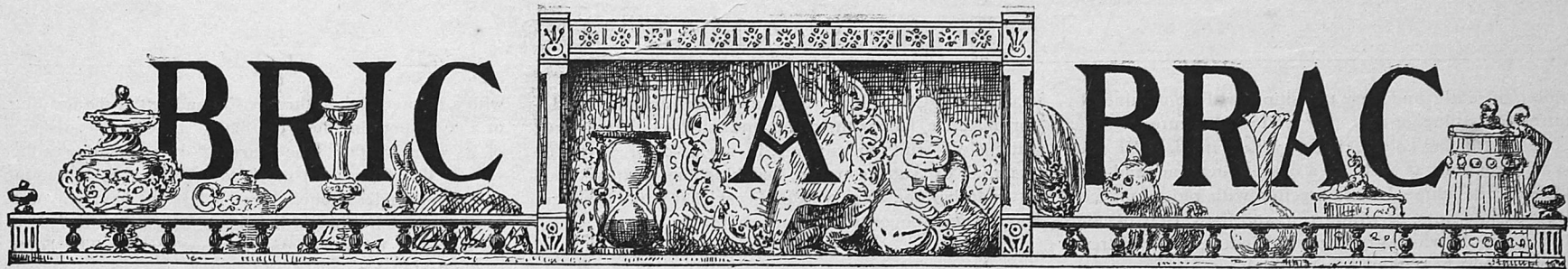
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SPURIOUS ANTIQUES AND "TRUCKAGE."



LITTLE difficulty is found in tracing the French word, "truckage," to the English "truck." The term is used by the French to express that art which the present mania for collecting old-fashioned bibelots has brought to a degree of perfection which few amateurs suspect. The manufacture of "antiques" has for some time been a very productive business, and many collectors, nay, many experts, gloat over art treasures of ancient times which have just been made in the work-shop "round the corner." It is impossible to lay down any rules by which imitations may be detected, for the knowledge of such things can only be imparted by long practice and experience, and the best expert is often puzzled and has often to give evasive answers. A few hints, however, may be given to beginners in the collecting business which will prove useful and interesting.

The Chinese imitate their old wares with great perfection. The well-known story of a priest who kept in the sanctuary of his temple a marvelous piece of white porcelain, which had no equal in quality or luster, shows us to what extent the "Heathen Chinese" can make counterfeits. One day a traveler asked to see this piece, and examined it carefully. A few months after he returned, and presented to the astonished priest the duplicate of the vase he had always considered as unique. The old man was dumbfounded; it was a piece of unquestionable age. The paste, the glaze, even the texture bore evidence of its antiquity; and yet the traveler, who was a skillful potter, averred that he had made it since he had seen the original, the size of which he had measured with his hand, and the texture of which he had taken an imprint of with some wax concealed in his sleeve.

What a lesson in this anecdote for collectors!

In the productions of Japan, when the pieces are of high class, or richly ornamented, the difference is more easily detected. The old ones, made for princes or Daimios, were produced regardless of cost. The artisan, who was paid by the year, and not by the piece, as in modern times, always endeavored to reach the highest craftsmanship, so that his name would go down to posterity. Consequently the work was elaborate, and often painfully minute. In the modern imitations, which are made to sell, more rapid and effective methods are employed, and with a little experience it is easy to recognize them. European tools have also been introduced, and if the expert is familiar with the manufacture of pottery, which he ought to be, the marks left in the paste by the tools will often show him that pieces reputed to be several centuries old were made with tools used in Japan for the first time about five years ago. So-called old pieces have also defects in the glaze or the paste which could never have occurred accidentally, and a man who knows pottery-making will at once detect the intention of the cunning Jap to make defective pieces on purpose to stamp them with a "cachet" of antiquity.

In European porcelains, most of the important factories, such as Sèvres and Dresden, stamp their biscuits on the bottom in blue under the glaze. After the glaze has been applied, the pieces that are not first-class are sold undecorated, but the stamp of the factory has been cancelled by a slight cut through the glaze, done with a wheel. Dealers buy these blanks, fill up the cuts, have them decorated like the perfect pieces, and sell them as genuine. By passing the finger nail over the mark of the factory, the cut is always perceptible. Besides this mark, to make the piece perfect, one, and often two other marks, such as that of the gilder and painter are necessary. On "scratch" pieces these never tally in date, and we often see a piece of Sèvres china bearing the factory mark of 1859, for instance, with a gilder's stamp of 1848, and a painter's mark of the last century. If the pieces are entirely spurious the marks are so carelessly made that a little experience will teach the collector to detect them at sight.

One of the great troubles of an expert are family traditions. It is a thankless task to show up as a falsehood the relics of past generations; and, however carefully it is

done, the unfortunate expert is always blamed for it. If the piece to be judged is genuine, the whole family say: "We knew it!" If it is not, the expert is politely shown to the door, as if it was his fault. This is the history of many a piece of porcelain. A document is found in some old "secrétaire," stating that Sultan Haroun-al-Raschid sent to Lord Fitzpotter a vase of Persian earthenware in the year 1620, in appreciation of his heroic conduct in the war in Dalmatia. His grandson finds this paper; but where is the vase? A general search begins among the sisters, the cousins and the aunts, and at a solemn family conclave it is decided that one particular piece of pottery, held by the family, must be the vase in question, and so it is accepted at large. The next generation show it to an expert. This unfortunate hears the family record, sees the original document, and generally tries to get out of the scrape; but if hard pressed, to save his own reputation, he will often show the astonished relatives of the great man the stamp of some Staffordshire factory of the early part of this century. And so are many kittens drowned.

Modern pottery boiled in oil and buried in wood ashes soon becomes very old. Ivories boiled in honey and hung up the chimney quickly become venerable antiques. Glass buried in a stable becomes iridescent, and many a bottle of the time of Charles II, fished out of the Thames, the water of which has wonderful chemical properties, has been sold as old Roman glass.

For many years, near one of the piles of London bridge stood an old man, up to his knees in water, washing out in a wooden pan, at low tide, the mud he scraped up from the bottom of the Thames. A crowd would gather near him and follow, with interest, his patient labors. Often confederates in the crowd would help to increase the excitement. Panful after panful would be washed out, till at last the old fellow's eyes would glow, and an old rusty key would be found. Next would come a dagger, then a brass buckle. After a little wrangling, in which the British Museum would always be the aquatic antiquarian's stand-by, a provincial collector, for the small sum of one pound, would carry off these unique specimens, and the old man would begin again, bringing up the key, a dagger and a buckle soon after, exactly similar to those disposed of. A shop in Fore street made them at a reduced price for him, in consideration of the large supply he required.

Birmingham, for a long time, supplied Egypt, Greece and Italy with antiques, but the work was of too inferior a quality to deceive people when knowledge began to be diffused among collectors, and now Salonica, Athens, Naples, Alexandria and Rome manufacture their older stocks. The coins of Cleopatra, Cæsar and Anthony, which Napoleon found in Egypt, were genuine antiques it is true, but they were sent from Paris, and hidden on purpose in the desert. Many a Gallo-Roman museum contains things found by Napoleon III himself, which had for years before adorned the shelves of some old bric-à-brac shop in Paris. The buttons found on the battle-field of Waterloo are made in England, and much of the olive-wood from Jerusalem comes from the Rue du Faubourg du Temple. The best advice we can give to incipient collectors is to purchase articles that are handsome, and in the possession of which they will find enjoyment for the eye and the mind. But, unless archæological treasures can be purchased from dealers whose reputation is beyond question, let them be careful about buying *Napoleons of the time of Cleopatra*.

FREDERIC VORS.

FORGED COINS.

ALTHOUGH the taste for gathering rare and ancient coins was long prevalent among savants and antiquaries, it was not until the beginning of the sixteenth century that true collections were really formed. Numismatics then became a science, the number of whose students has steadily increased until they are now found among all classes of people. The liking for the study has, with many, grown into a passion.

At the period referred to, so great became the demand for these beautiful relics, yet so limited was the means of acquiring them, that skillful engravers soon found that fortunes were to be made by clever counterfeits, and their dies and struck-coins became all but perfect imitations of the originals.

Some Italians in Smyrna, early in the sixteenth cen-

tury, seem to have been the first to engage in this business, and so much skill did they bring to bear on their work, that even to this day their counterfeits are sold as genuine coins. Specimens of their forgeries are very numerous. The next to follow in this dishonest occupation were members of a family at Padua. The name "Paduans" was given to them, and the same term is still applied to designate their clever productions, which are principally imitations of the scarcer coins of the Roman Emperors.

Not to dwell too long on the list of these forgers, I will pass to the master of them all, one Becker, who lived in Germany at the beginning of this century. He was a man of high cultivation, a savant and an artist, who began by collecting coins from a love of science. Being of dissipated habits, however, and lacking the means to indulge them, he fell back upon his skill as an engraver, and cut several hundred dies, from which he struck thousands of coins, which were really admirable imitations of the genuine ones, and in the purest of metal. To give them an antique appearance, he used to place them in a box under his carriage, among old, rusty nails and other rubbish. He carried them with him in this way on numerous excursions, and the rubbing and tumbling which they thus received by contact with the rusty nails, produced the worn and ancient look so much desired. He facetiously called these journeys the "Promenade of the Ancients."

At the present time there are many forgers, the most of them to be found in Italy and Greece, but none of them have attained the audacious perfection of their predecessors named.

Having shown how the forgeries of ancient coins originated, let me proceed to explain how they may be detected. In this country, where there is no public collection of ancient coins, the study of Numismatics presents unusual difficulties: for books are unsatisfactory as guides to the detection of counterfeits, and the longest theories are of little or no service to those who need to fortify them by practical experience.

CAST COINS.—The forgeries most frequently met with are those made by simply taking a mold of each side of an antique coin, and then casting gold, silver or copper in the mold. These imitations, which are usually of a coarse character, are made everywhere, but are carried to various historic places and there buried, where Cook's excursionists or other travelers find them on excavating a few feet under the surface. The joyful discoverers, after having well rewarded their guide for his happy direction, bring back the invaluable treasures in triumph to their own country.

If the reader will bear in mind that, with the exception of a few heavy coins of the time of the early kings of Rome, all antique coins were "struck," and were besides of an exact and uniform weight, he will see how easy it is to detect the modern "casts," which have not the weight of the genuine compressed coin; thus, if the eye should not at once perceive that the metal is not pressed, an examination of the specific gravity of the coin will soon show whether the metal is cast or struck.

Electrotypes are also made from antique coins, but these are the poorest of the imitations, and are easily detected at the edge, where the joining of the two plates is distinctly seen.

FALSE DIES.—Of course the surest way to recognize a false die is to have made a special study of the history of such forgeries, as thus only are you enabled to say at once, on seeing a coin, that it was made at this or that period, and by so-and-so. In this country, however, such thorough study is at present impossible. The only safety, therefore, lies in studying the distinctive features of antique art. This can be done with comparative ease, and with such success that by simply knowing the date of a coin, you may at once declare the style of art which should be impressed upon it. The fine arts of a given period bear the unmistakable stamp which characterizes the art work of that period, as well in its prime as in its decadence.



Let us endeavor to trace the characteristics of art in its three great periods, viz: Antique, Renaissance and Modern. We will take as an illustration the well-known subject of Hercules killing the Nemean lion.